



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN VALENTINES FOR VETERANS

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) was one of many entities with a booth at the Valentines for Veterans Concert hosted by the Sioux Falls VAHCS this past Saturday in Sioux Falls.

SDDVA State Veterans Service Officer Gerald Lemme and Field Office Michael Maske manned SDDVA's booth.

The Valentines for Veterans program was a successful event for the Department and afforded our staff the opportunity to engage and address many issues with veterans and family members about a wide array of topics

from compensation benefits to how does becoming Medicare eligible affect Champ VA or Tricare benefits. Lemme and Maske also addressed questions relating to Tricare, Medicare, state and federal benefits, Veterans Choice program, presumptives, Champ VA, State Veterans Home and the GI Bill benefits.



Having both served their great country, Maske and Lemme shared camaraderie with these veterans and talked a little "shop".

"It's never too late to find out what benefits veterans are eligible," said Maske. "Our goal is to enrich the quality of life for our heroes."

Participating in this great outreach event also affords our department to visit with our network partners about new services and programs they are providing for our veterans.

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## INMAN RECOGNIZED FOR DEDICATION AND SUPPORTIVE CARE OF ELDERLY

SDDVA's Laura Inman, activities coordinator at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home was awarded the February 2017 Millie of the Month award by the South Dakota Health Care Association.

"On behalf of the long term care residents and South Dakota Health Care Association, I want to express how much we, as a community, appreciate Laura's efforts and dedication and investing so much of herself on behalf of the elderly and disabled residents," said Mark B. Deak, South Dakota Health Care Executive Director.

Inman offers an average of seven activities each day on campus. In addition, she also plans outings such as shopping, dining out, attending plays, hunting, fishing, car shows, rodeos, sporting activities, and site-seeing.

Laura also invites service organizations and community groups to the campus. She plans dances, quilting, art, music, poker, coffee gatherings, ice cream socials, and religious activities that offer opportunities for residents and community members to share an experience together.

The key to her success may lie in her ability to hone in on the interests of residents. She takes the time to interview incoming residents to find out their likes and dislikes, hobbies, and interests. She then plans activities designed to be fulfilling for them.

The Millie Award was created by the South Dakota Health Care Association and named after its first recipient Mildred Olson of Garretson, who was an exceptional caregiver. This award is open to any South Dakota Health Care Association Member. Each month's recipient is eligible to be named the "Millie of the Year Award," which is announced each September at an Awards Ceremony during the South Dakota Health Care Association's fall convention.



## PIERRE POST 8 TO HOLD COFFEE/ROUNDTABLE FOR VETERANS IN THE PIERRE AREA

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be participating in the Veterans Round Table/Coffee program at the Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street) in Pierre. The informational briefing will be held from 10:00 am—11:30 am.

SDDVA's Kevin Bowen will be manning an informational booth and will be working with veterans with regard to their benefits.



## SDNG APPOINTS NEW STATE COMMAND CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER

The South Dakota Army National Guard announced Chief Warrant Officer 5 Todd Dressler, of Rapid City, as the new state command chief warrant officer. A change of responsibility ceremony was held between Dressler and the outgoing command chief, Chief Warrant Officer 5 Lonny Hofer, in Pierre, Feb. 4. Dressler becomes the seventh state command chief warrant officer for the SDARNG since the position was established in 1999.

Hofer served in the position since May 2015 and retired with more than 42 years of military service.

As the state command chief, Dressler will serve as the senior warrant officer advisor to the adjutant general of the SDNG. He will serve under the direction of the adjutant general to address warrant officer development and strength management of the Warrant Officer Cohort.

Dressler will be responsible for keeping the adjutant general informed and make recommendations in matters of warrant officer recruiting, morale, welfare, schooling, promotion and retention. He will also oversee a Warrant Officer Advisory Committee and serve as the spokesperson to advise the adjutant general and the chain of command on warrant officer management.

Dressler began his military service in January 1984 when he enlisted in the SDARNG with the 854th Engineer Company in Wagner. He spent the next 12 years in numerous enlisted positions with the 854th, 1007th Quartermaster Company, 211th Engineer Company, 88th Troop Command and State Area Command Headquarters - attaining the rank of staff sergeant.

He received his appointment as a warrant officer in September 1995. Throughout his career, Dressler served in positions such as officer and enlisted personnel manager, force integration/readiness officer and active guard/reserve manager with Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City.

Dressler deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

Dressler has been employed by the SDARNG for 28 years and currently works in the human resource office as the AGR manager for Joint Force Headquarters.





## SDNG HOSTS 33RD ANNUAL DINING OUT

The South Dakota National Guard hosted its 2017 Dining-Out at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Feb. 2. The annual event brings together Guardsmen from across the state for a formal evening to honor the organization's history and to recognize individual and unit achievements from the past year. The atmosphere, while formal, includes deep-rooted traditions which lighten the mood and provide both members and guests not only plenty of laughs, but a chance to learn some of the organization's history, traditions and an opportunity to recognize individual and unit achievements.

A video highlighting the many accomplishments made by the men and women of the SDNG in 2016 was shown in addition to comments from Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the SDNG adjutant general. The National Guard also recognized a family, an employer and a public servant with awards recognizing their contributions to the SDNG mission.

The awards portion of the evening began by presenting the Rapid City Police Department with the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award. The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one employer in the state who provides exceptional support of our national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve.

"The Rapid City Police Department realizes the importance of a strong force and provides support and opportunities to members of the Armed Forces," said Maj. Lona Christensen, executive director for the SD ESGR committee.

They actively recruit National Guard and Reserve members to be part of the department and have created a formal policy for military deployment and reintegration to better support their employees during periods of military service. Each deploying employee has a primary point of contact assigned to them and their family to be a

resource for the family, maintain communication with the service member and help keep the chief informed regarding the needs and wellness of the service member and family.

The Rapid City Police Department is active in the Fraternal Order of Police. While the service member is out for extended military service, their dues to the FOP are paid by the RCPD so membership is not lost and the family can still receive support from them and utilize their facilities.

The Rapid City Police Department has Peer Support Program designed to provide confidential emotional support during and after times of personal or professional crisis. Service members transitioning back into the department are encouraged to reach out for support from this group.

"The Rapid City Police Department is proud of their employee's military service as evidenced by their creation of a National Defense Ribbon that officers who served in the Armed Forces are able to wear on their uniforms signifying their military service," Christensen said. "They are deserving of this recognition for their outstanding contributions to our military services."



## DINING OUT (CONTINUED)

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Hall, a member of the SDARNG's Joint Force Headquarters and a police sergeant in Rapid City, nominated his employer for the award and joined Chief Jegeris on stage for the presentation of the award from Gov. Daugaard, Reisch and Christensen.

The SDNG next awarded the Williamson Militiaman Award to retired Brig. Gen. R.J. Clifft. The Williamson Militiaman Award, established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-soldier or airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of the country.

Clifft served our state and nation for over 35 years in uniform, beginning with his 1970 enlistment in the South Dakota Air National Guard. He completed undergraduate pilot training at Laredo Air Force Base, Texas in 1972 and returned to South Dakota after F-100 pilot training at Tucson, Arizona in 1973.

He served in various assignments and leadership positions over the next 32 years to include: squadron fighter pilot, instructor pilot, fighter weapons instructor, operations officer, 175th Tactical Fighter Squadron commander, Headquarters director of operations, Headquarters chief of staff, and assistant adjutant general, SDANG, when he retired in 2006.

He flew the T-37, T-38, F-100, A-7 and F-16 aircraft with nearly 3,500 military flying hours. As squadron commander, he led the first European F-16 deployment and the first Air National Guard rainbow combat deployment to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, patrolling the northern no-fly zone over Iraq.

Like the majority of citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, Clifft pursued a parallel civilian career, spending 22 years with Northwest Airlines and five years with Delta Airlines flying and instructing, accumulating over 10,000 civilian flight hours.

"His advocacy for the military and the future of the South Dakota Air National Guard at Joe Foss Field continued after retirement when he volunteered to co-chair the Sioux Falls Area Chamber Military Task Force Committee," Reisch said to the audience, before announcing Clifft by name. "He energized the task force efforts when the Air Force announced the criteria and timeline of basing decisions for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

"His interaction with Gov. Daugaard, South Dakota's senators and congresswoman, the state legislature, Sioux Falls Mayor and City Council, Minnehaha and Lincoln County Commissions along with Air Force and National Guard Bureau leadership helped secure the long term future of the 114th Fighter Wing," Reisch continued. "His efforts led to letters of support from the Sioux Falls Mayor and Sioux Falls Airport Authority, resolutions of support from the Sioux Falls City Council and Minnehaha County Commission, and House Concurrent Resolution No. 1002 supporting the selection of the F-35 aircraft bed down at Joe Foss Field with unanimous House and Senate support. "I expect his outstanding contributions will lead to future F-35's in South Dakota and can personally testify to this man's passion for support of the military and commitment to the South Dakota National Guard," Reisch concluded.

Past recipients of the award include: Former Adjutants General Phil Killey and Harold Sykora; former U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson; former Governors William Janklow and Michael Rounds; and current Governor Dennis Daugaard.



## DINING OUT (CONTINUED)

To conclude the awards portion of the evening, Reisch awarded The Adjutant General's Family Award to Tanya and Charles Totten. The award recognizes family members who have supported their service members in a truly exemplary manner while managing family, careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices.

"The Totton family is the personification of the word 'volunteer,'" Reisch said. "Their willingness to offer their time and resources to ensure service members, veterans and their families in South Dakota receive support and recognition is the driving force behind their efforts."

In 2011, the Totton family began supporting Soldiers as committee volunteers and organizers of the 200th Engineer Company Camo Quilt Project to build 200 camouflage quilts and raise \$5,200 to pay for supplies and shipping. This exceptional effort was recognized by the South Dakota Legislature when the group received a commemoration from the House (HC 1017) for their work. They also partnered with Operation Military Kid to make Hero Packs for Chamberlain-area children whose military parents were deployed. Blankets were made for children from birth to three years old for their Hero Packs. Hero Pack backpacks contained age-appropriate items such as cameras and books and were given to children free of charge. The Tottons decided they wanted to further support the troops, so they worked with the Camo Quilt Project to raise enough money to process 400 pounds of beef into jerky, which they sent overseas to the 200th En. Co. while the unit was deployed to Afghanistan.

In August of 2013, the Tottons were a sponsor of the South Dakota Enlisted Association Flag Relay Run across South Dakota. Since then, they have organized a civilian co-ed team for the 11th Annual Black Hills Veterans March and Marathon on the Mickelson Trail in the Black Hills. In 2015, they won the "Marchers Favorite Rest Stop" during the BHVM where the crew manning the rest stop rang cow bells and served beef chislic with other staples to keep participants motivated and fueled to the finish. Additionally, they also received first place in the mixed co-ed team in the 16-mile mini march. In 2016, the Tottons continued to support the BHVM by organizing and participating on a team of marchers and are planning to continue their support and participation. In September 2016, they continued in their unwavering support for local service members and veterans when they spearheaded an initiative which raised enough funds to cover the cost for over 200 veterans and their spouses to enjoy a complimentary beef brisket and prime rib dinner at the annual Fallfest Cook-Off in Chamberlain. The Chamberlain/Oacoma Sun newspaper recognized the Tottons and their "quiet support for military members and their families in a variety of ways for years."

The Tottons have displayed their unwavering support for service members, veterans and their families. They continually look for new, innovative and exciting ways to show their gratitude and support through their efforts. The Totton family truly embodies selfless service through their tremendous actions and we are honored to recognize their dedication and contributions that make our organization better.





# Upcoming Events

Feb 10-12—SD American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma

Feb. 23—"I Spy Patriotism" Photography Exhibition—USD Muenster Center—Ballroom C—Vermillion—9:00 am—1:00 pm (CT)

Mar. 1—SFVAHCS Creative Arts Festival—Sioux Falls VA Medical Center 2:00 pm (CT)

Mar. 29—"Clay County's Fallen" Research Contest—USD School of Education—Room 118—Vermillion—5:00-8:00 pm (CT)

April 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)

Apr 28-30—DAV Annual Convention—AmericInn—Fort Pierre

Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown

Jun 22-25—State VFW Convention—Pierre

Aug. 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota



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